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AUTHOR	Bromsjo, Birger; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This study encompassed the following areas: (a) need for adult education, (b) knowledge concerning adult education, (c) motives for wishing to participate in adult education, (d) obstacles to participating in adult education, (e) plans for participation in adult education, and (f) experience of adult education. The pilot survey, carried out in 1972, consisted of interviews conducted by 22 interviewers from the Interview Unit of the Central Bureau of Statistics. Parallel to the pilot survey, alternative data were collected through a combined questionnaire and interview survey. The main survey, carried out in late 1973 and early 1974, consisted of interviews performed in six Swedish cities. Many of the specifics of the above surveys are included in Bergsten, Bromsjo, and Rubenson (1974). Some of the results were as follows: (a) half of the persons interviewed had some previous adult education within the past 5 years; (b) educational interests were closely bound up with the vocational role; (c) half the persons related desires to learn more about their hobbies or interests; (d) the younger interviewees were more interested in education connected with the parental role; and (e) many were interested in the rights and obligations of the citizen. Additionally, this study mentions a substudy, dealing with the participation and interest in adult education among undereducated young men, due to be issued early in 1975. (JCW)

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Title of project: Adult education: A study of needs and obstacles (SOS-VUX)

Project number 412

Scientific leader: Birger Bromsjö
Project leader: Kjell Rubenson
Assistant: Urban Bergsten

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In 1968 the National Board of Education and the Stockholm School of Education embarked on a project entitled "Adult education - opportunities and participation".

This project is made up of three sub-projects:

1) Adult education in Sweden - a structural survey

2) Study participation in three environments - an analysis of recruitment conditions in adult education

3) Drop-out in five forms of adult education.

The first of these sub-projects has been concluded, vid. Report no. 54 from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research of the Stockholm School of Education, April 1971.

Sub-project 2, now entitled "Adult education: A study of needs and obstacles", commenced on 1.1. 1972. The present bulletin describes the background and disposition of this project together with some of the general results obtained from the preparatory computer runs.

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Background and purpose of the project

People with short compulsory education are not taking part in adult education to the extent which one would like to see bearing in mind the rapidity of social change and the demands which this makes upon the individual. This state of affairs is all the more regrettable in view of the added importance which adult education can for various reasons be expected to acquire. Consideration must therefore be given while there is still time to possible means of counteracting the tensions within and between different generations to which this may lead. Clearly it is not enough merely to arrange and offer education in the traditional manner. The target groups do not respond to the desired extent. A different approach to the problem is therefore needed. Efforts must be made to arrive at a clear view of the overall conditions of life of the category concerned, together with the various roles in which they enact and the way in which they are interpreted. Only when this has been done will it be possible to say with any degree of certainty how the educational society is viewed and what changes may have to be effected. Consequently the motive aspect has an important part to play in the plotting process which now appears to be more and more urgently needed.

A review of previous research shows that there are many possible motives for studying during adulthood. Often these motives are closely bound up with educational background and the different roles played by the adult, the family role, the vocational role, the leisure role etc. Attitudes to different kinds of studies also change with increasing age. But although there may be a need for studies, that need may be stifled at source, partly by the external environment and partly due to psychological factors. Sometimes, presumably, there may be a lack of insight concerning the implications of studies and the opportunities existing in society today. Again, the requisite education may not be available.

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This survey sets out, on the basis of the total conditions of life and previous experience of the individual, with short compulsory education to study the following:

need of adult education
knowledge concerning adult education
motives for wishing to participate in adult education
obstacles to participation in adult education
plans for participation in adult education
experience of adult education

In this connection it is important to take into account the individual's position in the life cycle.

If the problems defined above can be solved in such a way as to supply knowledge concerning the relation of study needs and obstacles to different roles and previous experience of the individual, it should then be possible to disseminate information and take other action in order for the intentions underlying communal commitment to adult education to have the effects intended.

Pilot survey and construction of instruments

The instrument construction process has been described in Bergsten, Bromsjö, Rubenson (1972).

The pilot survey was carried out during the autumn of 1972 in three different municipalities in the County of Västmanland, viz Västerås, Hallstahammar and Sala (excluding the Parish of Sala itself).

Data were collected from the survey group by means of visiting interviews conducted by 22 interviewers from the Interview Unit of the Central Bureau of Statistics. The interviewers attended a special course of preparatory training. The experience derived from the pilot survey has been described in Bergsten, Bromsjö, Rubenson (1973 b).

Parallel to the processing of the pilot survey (from the autumn term 1972), an alternative data collection procedure was tried out. This procedure was a combined questionnaire and interview survey. Those not replying to the questionnaire were followed up in personal interviews. The results of this experiment showed that the purposes of the project cannot be attained solely by means of the combined method. The replies to the questionnaire were not complete enough, and owing to the large drop-out rate on the open questions, no detailed insight was obtainable. In view of the experience thus gained through this study, it was decided to collect data for the main survey of the SOS-VUX project by means of personal interviews. A more detailed account of the method study is contained in Report no. 86, June 1973: "The method of data collection - some viewpoints in the light of a method study."

Main survey

Data for the main survey were collected during the period October 1973 - February 1974. The interviews were conducted by the Interview Unit of the Central Bureau of Statistics in the following places:

Stockholm
Helsingborg
Karlskoga
Örnsköldsvik
Sävsjö
Järbo, Årsunda, Österfärnebo.

The survey group comprised approximately 1,100 with short compulsory education in the six places mentioned above, aged 28-32, 42-46, and 56-60. Ninety per cent of those contacted took part in the interview, which lasted for approximately one hour. An account of the collection of data is given in Bergsten, Bromsjö, Rubenson (1974). The same report also contains a description of the places

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selected in terms of population, economic structure, employment situation and adult education opportunities.

Results

The following account deals with some of the general results obtained from the preparatory computer runs.

Half the persons interviewed had taken part in some form of adult education during the past five years. Twenty-five per cent of the survey group had attended courses run by voluntary adult education organizations. By way of comparison, roughly 4 per cent had had previous experience of municipal adult education. As regards more specifically vocational education, 14 per cent had attended courses arranged by their employers and 3 per cent had undergone labour market training.

The results indicate that educational interests are closely bound up with the vocational role. Almost half the interviewees wanted to learn more about some topic connected with their work. The principal motive for participation is that of wanting to be able to cope with one's job. It was less common for people to want to participate in adult education with a view to obtaining better pay or changing jobs.

The recreational importance attached to education is reflected by the fact that half the persons interviewed stated that they would like to learn more about their hobbies or interests.

The younger interviewees were naturally more interested than the older ones in education connected with the parental role. Half of them stated that they would like to learn more about parenthood. The preferences indicated concerning the content of courses were very much concerned with personal relations, conflicts between the generations and the new school system.

Quite a sizeable group - 37 per cent - stated that they would like to learn more about the rights and obligations of the citizen. Of these, two-thirds wanted to attend a course while the remainder preferred the idea of independent study. Interest in independent studies is more widespread than has transpired in connection with adult education generally: for instance, less than one-fifth of those desiring training for a hobby activity wanted to pursue this training on their own.

The survey included a number of questions as to the way in which teaching should be arranged, its content and scope and the working methods practised. Here we may mention that 64 per cent of those who were interested in education for the sake of their current occupations were prepared to participate if education took place during working hours and with full pay. The corresponding figures for "during leisure and working hours" (assuming the payment of full wages) and "during leisure hours only" were 48 and 40 per cent respectively. One-third of interviewees stated that training should be arranged by employers. The corresponding figures for vocational school, municipal adult education and voluntary adult education organizations were 13, 16 and 14 per cent respectively.

Those who were interested in starting a course of studies were asked what working method they would prefer. This question revealed emphatic preferences for both teacher-led class instruction and study circle activities. On the other hand only a small number of persons could imagine themselves studying in a group without a teacher or studying privately with the opportunity of consulting a teacher.

One very important question is whether the potential interest in adult education recorded here will result in actual participation. A forecast on this point requires not only a knowledge of interests but also a measurement of preparedness for action. In order to arrive at a rough estimate of this quality, the interviewees were asked among other things

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when they intended to begin their studies. Sixty per cent replied "later than next term" or "don't know". This suggests that actual participation will be far lower than the potential interest recorded, a conclusion which is supported by the results of a long-term study forming part of the project.

In this connection great attention must be devoted to matters concerning social measures and information. Nearly half the interviewees could imagine themselves alternating between employment and studies if they could be paid while studying. Of these no less than 96 per cent felt that student pay should correspond to between 76 and 100 per cent of their regular wages. It is also worth noting that 13 per cent regarded opportunities of studying during paid working hours as being the main issue on which future collective bargaining should concentrate. A further 19 per cent put this matter second or third in order of importance.

Nearly 80 per cent of those asked replied that they had received some form of information during the autumn concerning adult education. Nearly all of them stated that this information had taken the form of brochures. It is interesting to note that the pilot study showed that less than half the people receiving brochures had actually read them.

The answers to the questions concerning information on adult education show that a relatively large proportion of the interviewees find this information inadequate, particularly on the subject of the financial assistance available to students.

Reporting

The SOS-VUX project will be reported in two phases, starting in the autumn of 1974. The first phase will involve an account of general results. In the second phase, arrangers of adult education and other interested parties will be given the opportunity of expressing requirements, based on

the general results, concerning the analysis of findings. Various reference groups will be set up to this end. A report concerning attitudes to labour market training is expected in December 1974.

The final report on the project will appear not later than June 1976.

Sub-study

The project also includes a longitudinal study of interest and participation in adult education among under-educated young men. This is a continuation of the survey which was conducted at the Institute of Education of the University of Gothenburg, aimed among other things at surveying any study interest that might exist among under-educated boys born in 1948 (Rubenson 1972).

The present survey should be seen against the background of the inadequate information available concerning the interest taken by under-educated young persons in adult education and the impediments to their participation.

More specifically, the purpose of this logitudinal study is:

- to investigate whether adult study plans have been realized
- to study the relationship of different background factors to participation in different forms of adult education
- to survey motives for participation in adult education
- to survey recruitment channels
- to survey impediments to participation in adult education
- to investigate whether any change has occurred in study interests.

A report on the survey will be issued early in 1975.

Reports from the project:

Eliasson, T and Höglund, B (1971). Adult education in Sweden. A structural survey. Report no. 54 from the Depart-

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ment of Educational and Psychological Research, the Stockholm School of Education. (Swedish only)

Bergsten, U, Bromsjö, B and Rubenson, K (1972). Study requirements and impediments to study in adult education. Background and disposition of the survey. Report no. 79 from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Stockholm School of Education. (Swedish only)

Bergsten, U., Bromsjö, B & Rubenson, K. (1973). Study requirements and impediments to study II. Method of data collection - viewpoints based on a method study. Report no. 86 from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Stockholm School of Education, 30 pp. (Swedish only)

Bergsten, U., Bromsjö, B. & Rubenson, K. (1973). The SOS-VUX Project. Background and Design. Research Bulletin from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Stockholm School of Education, no. 77, 63 pp.

Bergsten, U., Bromsjö, B. & Rubenson, K. (1973). How are study requirements and impediments to study among related to roles and experience? Folkbildningsarbetet, no. 4, pp 17-20. (Swedish only)

Bergsten, U., Bromsjö, B. & Rubenson, K. (1973, b). Study requirements and impediments to study in adult education III. The pilot study - An evaluation. Report no. 95 from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Stockholm School of Education, 36 pp. (Swedish only).

Bergsten, U., Bromsjö, B. & Rubenson, K. (1974). Study requirements and impediments to study IV. Disposition - implementation-representativeness. Report no. 110 from the Department of Educational and Psychological Research, Stockholm School of Education, 44 pp. (Swedish only)

Adress:

Pedagogiska Institutionen
Lärarhögskolan i Stockholm
Fack